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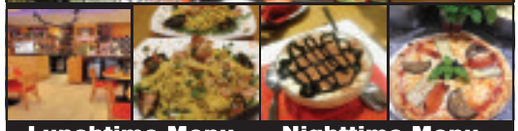

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CHILDREN from Dr Radcliffe's Church of England Primary School watch Openreach engineer Karl Rolfe install a new fibre broadband network for Steeple Aston with Stacey King from BT and MP Victoria Prentis MP SEE PAGE 6

Hospital campaigners 'disgusted' by lack of consultation

WARD PLANS SPARK ANGER

Kieran Davey
kdavey@nqo.com

CAMPAIGNERS fighting proposed cuts to services at Banbury's Horton General Hospital have criticised the NHS trust involved for moving services without consultation.

A total of 28 beds will be moved at the Horton, and 60 staff will be redeployed, the Keep The Horton General campaign was told last week.

From October, the beds will be moved from the hospital's F Ward to the Oak Ward, to provide more short-stay and orthopaedic care.

It comes as the Oak Ward's stroke unit is to be moved to the medical unit on level one under plans by Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Campaign chairman Keith Strangwood said he was "disgusted" the group had not been consulted before the changes were announced.

Despite attending community partnership network meetings and drop-in sessions with the trust, he said he had been given no indication the changes were to be made.

He added: "They have been so sneaky. They tell us they want to be open and then make changes like this.

"We all got told in the middle of our meeting when our phones started going off. It was very heated.

"This is quite a major change without consultation with us."

The trust's director of clinical services, Paul Brennan, said in a statement that "the changes are part of the continuing development of our services to provide consistent, quality care."

He added: "The proposals involve Oak Ward being reconfigured to care for orthopaedic patients and short-stay medical patients. This will include 18 beds for orthopaedic patients and 18 beds for short-stay medical patients. This provides an increase in the number of medical short-stay beds from eight to 18.

"These plans enable us to provide a better integration of our general medicine and medical assessment services, and the development of ambulatory care and treatment in line with models that we have already introduced at the John Radcliffe Hospital."

Mr Brennan insisted there would be no reduction in the number of people seen at the hospital.

The campaign group was told that the F Ward would become a community hospital as a result of the changes, but the trust said although they had been asked by staff about whether it was a possibility, there had been no formal discussion on the matter.

The surprise changes are the latest shock for residents who have been fighting plans to cut services at the Horton for more than a decade.

In 2006, 3,000 people joined a march through Banbury to protest against possible cuts to services.

The trust will launch a consultation in October on plans to reduce maternity services at the hospital to save £2.2m.

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Taxi checks prove to be 'big success'

Initiative prompts a warning for drivers to stay in control of licences and insurance

Kieran Davey
kdavey@nqo.com

TAXI drivers in Banbury and Bicester have been warned to keep their licences and insurance up to date after council officers carried out spot checks in the towns.

More than a dozen drivers were caught and warned over two nights for a range of breaches, including failing to display ID badges and out of date insurance details.

Council staff, joined by local police officers, checked taxis to make sure vehicle plates matched drivers' registration documents, and that the latter were up to date.

In Banbury town centre on Friday, June 24, 17 taxis were stopped and eight were found to have minor issues.

A council spokesman said one driver was ordered to display his ID badge who had it hidden from view, while another was sent home as he did not have one available to show officers.

> Cherwell is committed to ensuring that its residents feel as secure and comfortable as possible when travelling by taxi

Councillor Tony Ilottt

A day later in Bicester, officers visited three taxi firms to check on vehicles before stopping 11 cars during checks.

Six drivers were warned for issues with their licences.

Cherwell District Council lead member for public protection Tony Ilott said the operation was a "big success" and that similar checks would be carried out throughout the year.

He added: "We take the licensing of our taxi drivers incredibly seriously and it is one of our top priorities to ensure that all drivers are fully compliant and properly licensed. Cherwell is committed to ensuring that its residents feel as secure and comfortable as possible when travelling by taxi.

"The vast majority of Cherwell's drivers are very happy to work with us on compliance. They know it is in everyone's best interests for them to offer customers an excellent service.

"Concurrently with these spot checks we are also consulting on the introduction of a new policy attaching further conditions to taxi licences."

Drivers were also checked to make sure Hackney meters were sealed and roof lights were switched on.

The council is also set to introduce a new fit and proper person test for taxi drivers in North Oxfordshire to give more protection to passengers.

Under the new licensing policy there would be new safeguarding training to make drivers more alert to the risks passengers face, and encourage vigilance when reporting any misconduct or criminal activity.

The council are currently holding a public consultation on the new policy.

At present, taxi drivers will get an infringement notice if they breach their licence conditions, but under the new system they would be given penalty points which can lead to their licence being suspended or revoked.

Stamps to aid causes' work

Barry Whitehead with the latest batch of stamps

MORE than 150,000 used stamps have been donated to a Banbury church as they continue a two-year fundraising project.

Members of the Church of Latter-day Saints in Bankside have been collecting, cutting out and sorting stamps which will now be sold to raise money.

The collection has been donated through a variety of sources, including avid stamp collectors passing on albums and people getting rid of old Christmas card envelopes.

When they are sorted, the stamps will be sent on to Oxfam and Leukaemia Care who will sell them.

The church's local leader Bishop Michael Mallett said: "What a blessing it is to be able to serve in such a simple way. We have been taught 'that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass'.

"This simple act of saving and processing stamps makes a world of difference in the lives of individuals at home and abroad."

Anyone with stamps to donate can drop them off at the Artery arts centre in Parsons Street.

Owner Barry Whitehead said: "It's so wonderful seeing so many people support this initiative, and the huge influx of stamps we received in the last month or two has been phenomenal.

"It is a great way for people to support the two charities without having to consider the financial cost.

"Used stamps are a surplus and we often bin envelopes without realising that the stamps actually have a value of their own after they have served their initial purpose."

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Good news for savers as community bank returns

MP helps to relaunch service at CAB to keep money local

Kieran Davey
kdavey@nqo.com

PEOPLE in Banbury are being encouraged to start preparing early for Christmas after the relaunch of the town's community bank.

Volunteers from Cherwell Community Bank are calling on savers not to resort to expensive payday lenders when it comes to the festive period but instead keep their money local.

It comes after the bank held a reopening event at the Citizen Advice offices in Banbury, where volunteers were joined by Banbury MP Victoria Prentis and town mayor Gordon Ross.

The service will also offer advice to customers on how they can best save their money, and offers saving plans through the Citizens Advice offices.

Anyone living or working in the Cherwell district is eligible to join as a saver or borrower.

Speaking after the event Mrs Prentis said: "It is a pleasure to be opening the re-established Cherwell Community Bank. The bank will provide a variety of financial services to people, including savings and simple banking facilities.

"Saving for the future is really important.

"It is especially helpful to have a local service which can offer advice and support to allow people to make informed decisions about what they could do with their money.

"This service will be particularly useful to those who may have difficult financial histories."

The bank is also supported by Cherwell District Council and housing association Sanctuary Housing.

The council's lead member for housing, John Donaldson, said: "Community banks promote a thriving local economy. They are financial cooperatives which mean that any profits generated are shared with their members.

"It may sound early to start talking about Christmas, but the bank's savings plan means that residents can avoid expensive borrowing at the last minute.

"And if they are in need of a Christmas loan, residents may well be in a better position to qualify for one if they have a relationship with the bank."

The community bank recently opened a new service point in Banbury at the Citizens Advice office in Cornhill, and further service points are set to open in Bicester and Kidlington in the next few months.

The Banbury service point is open on Tuesday mornings from 10am to 12.30pm. Application packs to join the community bank can also be collected from the office or downloaded from northamptonshirecu.co.uk

MP Victoria Prentis, Banbury town mayor Gordon Ross and Cherwell Community Bank volunteers

First BHS stores are set to close

THE first wave of BHS stores will close at the end of this month, administrators announced this week.

Shopworkers' trade union Usdaw said the first closures would affect about 600 staff members although confirmed the Banbury store at Castle Quay was not among the first 20 to go.

Stores set to go this month include High Wycombe, South Shields and Slough and will cease trading on July 23, and wind down by July 25.

Shopworkers' trade union Usdaw national officer Dave Gill said: "We believe there is hope for the remaining stores with the administrators continuing to seek buyers and we are still waiting to hear the details of Sir Phillip's offer to 'sort' the pension scheme."

Sun starts fire

A SEWING machine shop in Banbury caught fire after the sun shone through a magnifying glass in its window display.

The fire broke out at GTS Sewing Machines in Mewburn Road at about 8.30pm on Monday.

When crews arrived they found the building full of smoke and a fire in the shop window.

The fire service asked people to make sure items such as shaving mirrors, bottles or magnifying glasses were not left near windows.

Rail line to close

THE railway line between Banbury and Bicester North will be closed from July 30 for nine days.

A replacement bus service is being put on by Chiltern Railways to ferry passengers between Leamington Spa, Banbury and Bicester as part of the railway's multi-million pound upgrade.

It will reopen on Monday, August 8.

Play day with a touch of Brazil

THE fun of the carnival will roll into Banbury next week as some Brazilian spirit is bought to the town ahead of the Rio Olympics.

Carnival-themed arts, circus skills and sports are being staged for the Banbury Play Day event on Wednesday, July 27.

The carnival will pitch up at People's Park and is free for all families.

Cherwell District Council deputy leader George Reynolds said: "For this year's Play Day we will be looking forward to the Rio Olympics by bringing the fun of the carnival to Banbury.

"Play Day offers an action-packed day of family fun. There are vigorous activities, such as those being run by Cherwell's recreation and sport activators, alongside gentle and creative sessions provided by our local children's centres and other partners. Banbury Play Day is a free way to entertain all the family, and I am encouraging families to bring a picnic if they want to make a day of it.

"The Rio Olympics are sure to have us all captivated in August, and Banbury Play Day is a wonderful way of helping us all get in the mood."

The day is being hosted by the Cherwell Play Partnership group and will run from 11am to 3pm. For more information contact jon.wild@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Web network aims to unite small charities

A GROUNDBREAKING network of small charities and voluntary groups has been set up in Oxfordshire by the founder of Yellow Submarine.

More than 150 organisations have so far signed up to the new Locl Oxfordshire website, which was launched earlier this month by learning disability champion Toby Staveley.

The site aims to bring together not-for-profit groups in the county to demonstrate the difference they are making and provide a platform for joined-up working.

Mr Staveley set up Oxfordshire-wide learning disability charity Yellow Submarine in 2009 and stepped down as CEO in May.

The 38-year-old said he had seen the prospects get "grimmer and grimmer" for his colleagues at other charities in recent years.

Toby Staveley

He said: "Local charities are facing unprecedented challenges. Either the local voluntary sector works collaboratively and starts demonstrating its value or large parts of it will be lost."

To join the new directory a charity must have an annual turnover of £1m or less, with a large proportion of the 154 signed up on an income of less than £25,000.

Between them the charities have 97,869 beneficiaries, 5,953 volunteers and 787 staff members on their books, and a total financial value of £4,264,144.

Mr Staveley added: "Technology presents an opportunity for small groups to support one another and respond collectively in ways which previously haven't been possible.

"There's a Down's Syndrome charity a couple of miles away from Yellow Submarine which I never knew existed, and that's ridiculous."

In the coming months it is hoped that Locl will be rolled out across the UK, with a separate directory for each county.

For more information or to sign up to Loclp visit locl.org/oxfordshire/

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Governor quits 'farcical' NHS trust

ANOTHER governor has resigned from Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, saying of his experience: "You could not make it up."

John Green, the trust's public governor for the South West, handed in a resignation letter earlier this week.

He wrote that its response to last year's Mazars report, in which it was revealed that hundreds of patients – including many in Oxfordshire – had died unexpectedly under its care, was "farcical" and that the public were entitled to a "full and detailed explanation" as to why the chief executive and board were still in place.

Adult mental health and learning disabilities run by Southern Health in Oxfordshire are in the process of being wound down.

In July 2013, Oxford teenager Connor Sparrowhawk drowned in a bath under its care, sparking a nationwide campaign for justice and accountability.

Mr Green said: "Whilst I have no doubt as to the dedication of the Trust's front line workforce, support staff and operational managers... I no longer have any confidence in the board of the Trust."

Of the last four years, he added: "I have found this to be one of the most interesting, albeit bizarre, business experiences of my life.

"As a case study in management failure, 'You could not make it up'."

Southern Health spokeswoman Liz Pusey said: "John's comments will be shared with the wider board and council of governors.

"Following the extraordinary council of governors meeting adjourned earlier this year, the Trust is currently supporting governors in appointing representation to ensure that any resolutions put forward for consideration when the meeting reconvenes are legally sound."

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Cathy Bishop, from Spurgeons, a charity supporting young carers, presents the trophy to winning team captain Paul Hopkins of Dovecote Kitchens

Golfing day raises £12k for young carers

MORE than £12,000 was raised to support young carers in Oxfordshire at a charity golf day.

Spurgeons, which support young people whose lives are affected by having to look after a sibling or parent, invited 136 players to take part in their fundraiser at Tadmarton Heath Golf Club.

It came after Tom Clayton, this year's captain at the Banbury-based golf club, decided to make the charity his cause of the year after hearing about the difficulties that young carers have to cope with every day. A team from Dovecote Kitchens were named the winners on the day, which was sponsored by Jaybee Motors.

Cathy Bishop, a senior project officer with Spurgeons, said: "Tadmarton's generosity and hard work has delighted our project staff.

"This large donation will enable us to offer Banbury young carers valuable respite and social opportunities such as day trips, residentials and outdoor activities."

Jake, one of 550 young carers who live in the Banbury area, spoke to the players at the golf club for being so supportive and they will not understand how grateful young carers are because people like me rely on the charity just to get them through day to day."

Girls 'took Class A drug in school'

Three pupils suspended after reportedly taking ecstasy on sports day

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A NORTH Oxfordshire school has suspended three pupils after reports they took ecstasy in school.

Parents from the Warriner School in Bloxham were alerted by headteacher Annabel Kay after an allegation the drug was taken during the school's sports day.

Dr Kay said she had been told by pupils that such drugs were becoming "readily available" at festivals in the area, as well as in Banbury's Spiceball Park.

She contacted parents with her concerns following the alleged incident on June 22, and has revamped the school's tutor programme to make sure pupils are educated about the danger of illegal drugs.

She added: "What I will not tolerate is that it is acceptable that these drugs come into our school.

"We have worked really hard to create an environment where students can report to us things that they are concerned about.

"We just try to educate them and give them resilience. Our job is also to keep parents informed.

"There has been a zero-tolerance policy in this school towards drugs for a number of years."

Dr Kay added she had contacted other headteachers locally to alert them to the problem, but said there was no evidence yet pupils took ecstasy in the school and it had only been reports.

The three pupils, believed to be girls in their mid-teens, have been temporarily excluded from school while an investigation takes place.

Dr Kay, who has been at the school for five years, told the *Banbury Cake* one of the girls concerned said she had been ill but claimed it was not because of taking drugs.

Ecstasy is a Class A drug, which means it is illegal to have, give away or sell.

According to drug advice website FRANK, taking ecstasy can make people feel lethargic and depressed, while long term the drug is linked to liver, kidney and heart problems.

Thames Valley Police spokeswoman Hannah Jones confirmed police had received a report of three pupils bringing a tablet into school on June 22.

She added one of the pupils was said to have taken part of the tablet and required medical attention.

A police probe is under way.

In June, Anna-Marie Cockburn of Oxford, whose daughter Martha Fernback, 15, died three years ago after taking 91 per cent pure MDMA, called for young people to be given more safety information about drugs such as ecstasy.

‘I beat Theresa May in race to become the PM’

Liberal candidate bested her Conservative opponent in the race to school's top job in1974

Luke Sproule
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WHEN they were faced with the challenge of Theresa May in the race to become Prime Minister, Andrea Leadsom, Michael Gove, Stephen Crabb and Liam Fox dropped like flies – not to mention Boris Johnson.

But Banbury woman Rosalind Hicks-Greene went one better, beating Theresa May to the top job... in 1974.

The mum-of-three went up against Mrs May– then Theresa Brasier – in a mock election at Wheatley Park School on the same day Britain went to the polls to decide between Ted Heath and Harold Wilson.

Ms Hicks-Greene, representing the Liberals, won 136 votes to Conservative candidate Mrs May’s 104, with Valerie Fortescue coming third for Labour on 39.

She said: “Theresa was an obvious Tory and I was an obvious Liberal.

“We each made a speech in assembly and then debating took place and I won.

“Theresa was fine about it, it was all a bit of fun.

“It is fascinating to have done it, I am the only person in the UK to say I beat her to becoming Prime Minister.”

Mrs May was moved up a year in school as a high-flying student and studied A-Level history alongside Ms Hicks-Greene before going on to read Geography at Oxford University.

She started the school when it was Holton Park Girls’ Grammar before it merged to become Wheatley Park School in 1971.

She said: “Going into politics was always something Theresa was likely to do.

“She was always a serious person, I thought she might have become a university lecturer.

“She was quite studious but she knew how to make her opinions heard.

“We would have some lively debates in A-Level history lessons and she always went off and did all the background reading.”

While Mrs May ended up becoming an MP in 1997 before moving into the shadow cabinet and the government.

Ms Hicks-Greene went straight to work at Blackwell’s Bookshop in Broad Street after she finished school.

She later qualified as a barrister and now works in London but still lives in Banbury.

She said: “In many ways I have done the exact opposite of Theresa.

“But I think she is absolutely the right person to be in 10 Downing Street.

“She is the right person to be leading the country, she is a safe pair of hands and she will be a good negotiator.

“She will be a match for Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande and I should know because we locked horns once.”

Ms Hicks-Greene said she supported Mrs May despite not being a Conservative herself, and believes the Prime Minister’s views have moved to the centre since their election debates in February 1974.

She said: “She was what I would have called a Thatcherite, although it was before Margaret Thatcher was Conservative leader.

“Her politics at the time was a more right-wing politics than it is today.

“Now she has more old-fashioned liberal values.

“Back then I think she would have fitted into Ted Heath’s cabinet quite well, although she was a woman which might not have helped her.”

Above, Rosalind Hicks-Greene, centre, celebrates after beating Valerie Fortescue, and Theresa Braiser (now May), right, to become “Prime Minister” at Wheatley Park School in 1974; Mrs Hicks-Greene, far left, and Prime Minister Theresa May, left, today

Book challenge

CHILDREN in Oxfordshire have been encouraged to take part in a summer reading challenge by Victoria Prentis.

The Banbury MP wants youngsters to sign up for the scheme, run by charity The Reading Agency, at their nearest library.

Last year more than 8,395 young people from the county took part.

This year the challenge has linked up with the Roald Dahl Literary Estate to mark 100 years since his birth.

Mrs Prentis said: “My children and I love reading books, particularly over the summer. The challenge provides an opportunity for children to read and talk about the books they borrow from their local library.”

Head’s farewell

THE headteacher of a North Oxfordshire school has stepped down after 12 years in charge.

Michael Goodwin had his last day at Sibford School near Banbury on Thursday when pupils and staff said farewell. He said: “This has been the longest position I have held during my 36-year teaching career. It’s been a great job and I’ve really enjoyed it, but I know that now is the time to start a new chapter in my life.”

He will be replaced by Tony Spence, who will move to Oxfordshire in August with his wife Jill and their three children to take on the role.

Stolen goods

THIEVES broke into a house and stole a television before dumping it outside a school.

Thames Valley Police said burglars broke into the home in Fiennes Road, Banbury, in the early hours of Friday and took a television, laptop, amplifier, electric guitar and a handbag.

Some of the items, including the television, were later found in an alleyway near St Joseph’s School, a force spokesman added. Those with information should call 101.

Worship winners

CHILDREN from church schools in Oxfordshire have taken part in a contest exploring whether people need buildings to worship in.

Pupils in the Diocese of Oxford explored the concept of worship and wrote poems and designed questionnaires for parishioners.

Cropredy Church of England School was one of the winners and was presented with a plaque and a cheque for £250 by acting bishop the Rt Rev Colin Fletcher.

Time capsule celebrates church building project

A CONGREGATION at a Banbury church has celebrated the final phase of its new building project by adding in a time capsule.

The Methodist Church in the Fairway is being rebuilt on the current site after the previous building was demolished to make way for 11 new homes.

When tearing down the church earlier this year developers uncovered a capsule dating back to March 1957 – when the church was originally constructed.

Its contents included newspapers and magazines, and these have now been updated and reburied for future generations to find.

The new construction is being provided as part of Cherwell District Council’s Build! programme which helps regenerates unused plots of land.

The council’s lead member for housing, John Donaldson, helped bury the capsule last Friday.

He said: “Fairway Methodist Church has played a central role in the life of Ruscote and the surrounding area for generations and we are delighted to see the hard work that has been put into its regeneration now coming to fruition.

“The discovery of the time capsule was exciting for the contractors and congregation alike. Updating its contents and reburying it is a fitting way to plan for the future while honouring the past.”

The new church is due to be completed this summer.

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Scales of justice

CASES heard recently at county magistrates' courts:

DARREN BERRY, 49, of Reid Place, Upper Heyford, admitted driving on a public road, namely Middleton Stoney Road, Bicester, without insurance on September 16. Fined £300 and ordered to pay a £30 victim surcharge and £85 costs. Driving licence endorsed with six points.

MOHAMED BORNI, 35, of Britannia Road, Banbury, admitted driving on a public road, namely Bloxham Road, Banbury, without a driving licence or a valid MOT certificate on July 18, 2015. Fined £200 and ordered to pay a £20 victim surcharge and £85 costs. Driving licence endorsed with three points.

JACK BARRATT, 35, of Bretch Hill, Banbury, admitted stealing a laptop worth £60 from Cash Converters, and a charity box from Co-op, both in Banbury, on May 21. Also admitted stealing a charity box from Co-op, in Banbury, on September 29 last year. Ordered to pay £80 compensation.

COLIN MOORE, 61, of Keys Court, School Lane, Banbury, admitted failing to notify Cherwell District Council he was in employment, affecting his entitlement to council tax benefit and housing benefit, between March 29, 2010, and June 29, 2014. Handed a community order with a three-month curfew. Also ordered to pay a £60 victim surcharge.

DAVID TROVAO, 35, of Winters Way, Bloxham, admitted drink-driving on the A41 Oxford Road, Bicester, on June 12. Had 83 micrograms of alcohol in 100ml of breath, exceeding the limit of 35 micrograms. Fined £450 and ordered to pay a £45 victim surcharge and £85 costs. Handed a 20-month driving ban.

TAMMY BAIRD, 35, of Edmunds Road, Banbury, admitted stealing a container of protein shake worth £29.99 from Natural Health Store, George Street, Banbury, on June 6. Handed a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay £29.99 compensation and a £20 victim surcharge.

High speed net boosted

More than 80 properties in remote village gain access to super-quick broadband

Matt Oliver
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MORE than 80 homes and firms in a north Oxfordshire village can now access high-speed internet due to a multi-billion pound project.

The properties in Steeple Aston gained access to the new fibre broadband network after upgrade work for the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire project.

Villagers were joined on Friday by Banbury MP Victoria Prentis to celebrate the success, which now means 500 households and firms can benefit from faster download speeds online.

Mrs Prentis said: "I know how important a good internet connection can be to homes and firms.

"It is great that more of my constituents are getting access to high speed broadband which is increasingly used by people of all ages.

"It is clear there is still more work to be done as there are still many properties without access to this important infrastructure."

The roll-out was part of the Government's Broadband Delivery UK programme, led locally by Oxfordshire County Council and BT.

It is also supported by Cherwell District Council and the South East Midlands and Oxfordshire local enterprise partnerships.

From left, Michael Waine, Graham Porcas, Ken Atack, Victoria Prentis MP, Gero von Manstein, Talitha Markham, Libby Clinkard and Stacey King

In the latest work, 85 premises in Steeple Aston benefitted from the upgrade. They can now get download speeds of up to 80 megabits per second (Mbps) and uploads of up to 20Mbps.

It uses the BT Openreach network, giving people a choice of broadband provider.

The faster internet speeds were welcomed by Graham Porcas, who has run two businesses – Proma Machinery Ltd and Plasmatreat Ltd – from his home office in Steeple Aston for more than 10 years.

He said: "Good broadband access has been vital to enable me to do this successfully."

Stacey King, BT regional manager, said: "The roll-out of fibre broadband across Oxfordshire is progressing well and reaching more remote parts of the county."

"The number of premises in Oxfordshire now connected to fibre broadband is more than 274,000."

For more on the broadband roll-out, visit betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk

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New site for CAG groups

A NETWORK of more than 60 low-carbon community groups in Oxfordshire has launched a new website.

The Community Action Group (CAG) project's new site now has a group listings page for the first time where visitors can search for their local groups and find out more.

The creators also say the new site is easier to use.

CAG said: "We are excited to announce the launch of our brand new website.

"We've worked on it behind the scenes for several months, and have made it more attractive, interactive and user friendly.

"A special new feature is our groups listings page where you can search active CAGs in your area and find how to get involved.

"We expect to also introduce a new feature to help communities to share resources and skills later on this summer."

The group has also updated its logo and is in the process of reformatting its newsletter email The Key to give it a "fresh new look".

Started in 2001, the CAG network is the largest of its kind in the UK, running about 1,500 events per year, attended by over 65,000 local residents and contributing more than 27,000 volunteer hours to the county.

The network aims to be at the forefront of community-led climate change action, organising events and projects to take action on issues including waste, transport, food, energy, biodiversity and social justice.

VictoriaPrentisWestminsterViews

MP FOR NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

As our thorough and diplomatic new PM rightly says, 'Brexit means Brexit'

THE last column I wrote here was on the day of the referendum. A great deal has happened since then, and the view from Westminster has changed more than any of us imagined.

The result of the referendum came as a shock.

Our area was very closely split. I have heard from many of you in the weeks since the vote, and have sympathised with business people who fear for the future, while also listening to those who didn't like the direction in which Europe was heading, and who hope the situation will now change.

There is no point now in discussing whether or not we should have had a referendum in the first place.

We are where we are and, though we don't yet know the form it will take, Brexit means Brexit.

Going forward, the priority must be to get the best possible deal for all the people of Britain.

I have been a constitutional lawyer all my working life and I am looking forward to helping with this process where I can. David Cameron's decision to stand down is extremely sad, particularly for us in Oxfordshire.

He will go down in history as a great reforming Prime Minister and we know him best locally as a doughty supporter of the Horton General Hospital. I hope that we will be seeing him more in the future.

The new prime minister is also from the Thames Valley – Theresa May was brought up locally and is the MP for Maidenhead.

I worked with Theresa when I was a civil servant and on the Investigatory Powers Bill since my arrival in Westminster.

I have been impressed by her handling of complex matters.

She was the right choice for the job – she is thorough and experienced and is superb at difficult negotiations.

In the midst of all this you may be surprised to know that parliamentary life continues as usual: I have made speeches in the last few weeks on changing the law on homicide, and reducing court fees and charges.

Surgeries and pub tours, including my new venture into supermarket surgeries, continue as normal, and I very much enjoyed speaking about Charlotte Bronte at the new Buckingham Literary Festival recently.

Our new Prime Minister Theresa May

> Theresa May was the right choice – she is thorough and is superb at difficult negotiations

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Fails to set phasers to stun

STAR TREK BEYOND **(12A, 122 mins) Sci-Fi/Action/Thriller/ Romance. Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Zoe Saldana, Karl Urban, Simon Pegg, Anton Yelchin, John Cho, Idris Elba, Sofia Boutella, Lydia Wilson, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Deep Roy. Director: Justin Lin**

DEDICATED to Anton Yelchin, who died in a freak accident in June, and Leonard Nimoy, the third instalment of the rebooted Star Trek is a familiar conflation of past and future present that fails to set its phasers to stun.

JJ Abrams vacated the director's chair to make *Star Wars: The Force Awakens,* so Justin Lin, who helmed four turbo-charged entries of *The Fast And The Furious* franchise, steps into the fray.

He orchestrates action set pieces with confidence although some of the interstellar skirmishes are reduced to a dizzying blur by gyroscopic camerawork and overly enthusiastic editing.

Meanwhile, scriptwriters Simon Pegg and Doug Jung stoke the comedic ante with a slew of wry one-liners.

The crew of the Enterprise are three years into their five-year mission to boldly go where the cult 1960s TV show went before, without the benefit of state-of-the-art digital effects.

Captain James T Kirk (Chris Pine) is considering relinquishing the bridge because "things have started to feel a little... episodic".

He keeps his plans secret from the rest of the crew including human-Vulcan science officer Spock (Zachary Quinto), communications officer Uhura (Zoe Saldana), navigator Pavel Chekov (Yelchin), chief engineer Montgomery Scott (Simon Pegg) and helmsman Sulu (John Cho).

During a visit to a Federation starbase under the control of Commodore Paris (Shohreh Aghdashloo), an alien called Kalara (Lydia Wilson) issues a distress call to help recover her ship, which has crash-landed on a planet in a distant nebula.

Kirk and the team respond and subsequently come under attack from an otherworldly despot called Krall (Idris Elba) and his swarming drones.

While the Enterprise crew forges an alliance with feisty alien warrior Jaylah (Sofia Boutella), Kirk holds firm to his moral compass, defiantly informing Krall that it's "better to die saving lives than to live taking them".

Pine, Quinto and co are solid in roles that lack dramatic meat and don't progress the characters over two hours, and a flimsy, contrived plot resolves potential conflict with minimum blood, sweat and tears.

Throughout, the script affirms the need for the multi-species crew to stick together in times of adversity.

At least the utopian vision of original series creator Gene Roddenberry is in rude health.

THE BFG **(PG, 117 mins) Fantasy/ Adventure/Comedy. Mark Rylance, Ruby Barnhill, Jemaine Clement, Bill Hader, Penelope Wilton, Rebecca Hall, Rafe Spall, Olafur Darri Olafsson, Adam Godley. Director: Steven Spielberg.**

THE final collaboration of Steven Spielberg and Melissa Mathison, director and screenwriter of E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial, is a gloriumptious rendering of Roald Dahl's fantasy, peppered with the author's gobblefunk lexicon of jumbly words.

"Quite often, I is left instead of right," comments the title character to explain his muddled vocabulary, which rechristens two animals hippodumplings and jiggyraffes.

Sweetness and childish wonder glisten in every frame, including a towering motion capture performance from Mark Rylance as the eponymous hulk, who blows bottled dreams into bedrooms using his phizz-whizzing metal trumpet.

On-screen rapport between the Oscar-winning actor and young co-star Ruby Barnhill galvanizes the picture, building to a rousing crescendo at Buckingham Palace, where a swig of frobscottle, the BFG's effervescent green brew, induces rip-roaring bouts of whizzpopping.

The heroine is a precocious orphan called Sophie (Barnhill), who is snatched from her bed at the witching hour by a hooded 24-feet tall figure.

The behemoth spirits the girl over verdant valleys and crashing seas to the rolling landscapes of Giant Country.

Zoe Saldana and John Cho in Star Trek Beyond; inset, Ruby Barnhill as Sophie and Mark Rylance as The BFG

Cake Bookworm

I Found You **by Lisa Jewell is published in hardback by Century, priced £12.99 (ebook £7.99)**

SINCE her debut, *Ralph's Party,* in 1998, Lisa Jewell has been notching up bestsellers left, right and centre, and her latest superb offering, *I Found You,* is sure to join the ranks. Forty-something single mother of three Alice befriends a man she finds sitting on the beach, who claims to have lost his memory and has nothing of significance about his person. Meanwhile, 21-year-old Lily, recently emigrated to London from Ukraine, suspects that her husband Carl has gone missing when he doesn't return home from work one evening. While Lily's whole marriage is thrown into question when the police inform her that Carl Monrose never existed, the stranger Alice takes into her home is beginning to unlock memories that hearken back to an incident that occurred in 1993, involving a family holiday that ended in tragedy. But are the memories better left undisturbed? Capably handling the three intersecting storylines and her triumvirate of central characters, Jewell delivers a stunningly crafted plot to maximum effect.

The Unseeing **by Anna Mazzola is published in hardback by Tinder Press, priced £14.99 (ebook £7.49)**

THE Unseeing is based on the so-called Edgeware Road murder of 1837, when laundress Hannah Brown was killed, her body dismembered and her head, torso and limbs scattered all over London. Her fiance James Greenacre and his mistress Sarah Gale were arrested and sentenced to hang. Following the verdict, Sarah petitioned the Home Office for mercy, even though at her trial she said nothing in her own defence or to incriminate Greenacre. Anna Mazzola, whose day job is a criminal justice solicitor, imagines why Sarah didn't speak up in court, even though her life was at stake, and what role she played in the murder. *On The Other Side* **by Carrie Hope Fletcher is published in hardback by Sphere, priced £12.99 (ebook £6.49)**

YOU can't be a celebrity these days if you only have one talent. You have to be a multi-faceted variety act who can turn your hand to pretty much anything. Enter Carrie Hope Fletcher, the YouTube sensation and West End-star who releases her debut novel, On The Other Side this week. This young adult romance tells the story of Evie Snow, an 82-year-old who finds herself locked out of heaven and transported back 60 years to fix the mistakes of her past. Along the way she relives forgotten memories, sheds long-suppressed secrets and encounters lovers she never imagined would resurface.

ADVERTORIAL

Cloudy2Clear Announce Trusted Trader Partnership

Consumer champions Which? have now joined the thousands of customers who recognise that Cloudy2Clear Windows really are a business that you can TRUST. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has received the coveted 'Which Trusted Trader' status after going through a rigorous accreditation process entirely focussed on customer service.

Group Managing Director Marcus McGee believes that Which? have endorsed Cloudy2Clear's long standing company policy of delivering the highest standards possible at all times. 'Our service is simple. If your double glazing has misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 25 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people money, although that obviously helps. Whilst a number of tradespeople perhaps don't focus on customer care as much as they should do, we make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle.

Locally Cloudy2Clear service the Oxford, Banbury & Abingdon areas and manager James Miller agrees that this approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated as both my customers and, obviously a body as nationally important as Which? now recognise.'

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Music and fun at Bodfest'16 Pictures by John Washburn

Residents enjoy sunny day at festival

HUNDREDS flocked to an annual festival to enjoy the sunshine and the talent of local bands.

The Bodicote Festival has become a summer highlight for the village and it seems Bodfest'16 was no exception.

Residents enjoyed 12 hours of non-stop music and a street market that provided them with a variety of shopping opportunities.

John Washburn, Bodfest chairman, said: "We were blessed by the weather and the size of the crowd caught us a little by surprise.

"The many food stalls did such a roaring trade that they sold out, and, despite restocking, the two bars on site were virtually drunk dry. Unlike last year, when for the second time Bodfest was staged at the village green and music was provided at the local pubs, this time we easily covered the quite considerable cost of putting on the event, and there is a good sum left over that will be used to support village organisations and initiatives.

"The team that worked so hard to make the day happen can be justifiably proud of what they achieved."

Planning is getting under way for next year's show.

Brexit a 'catastrophe' for NHS

Doctor fears impact of vote on county's hospitals as EU staff consider leaving UK

Pete Hughes
phughes@nqo.com

BREXIT will have a "catastrophic" effect on staffing at Oxfordshire's already over-stretched hospitals, an Oxford doctor has warned.

Rachel Clarke said dozens of EU doctors and nurses she currently works with are considering whether to leave the country because they now feel unwelcome.

She and others in the NHS have also reported EU workers in Oxford receiving racist abuse in the wake of the referendum result.

The fear is that European doctors and nurses may choose to leave the UK even if they are not forced to and Oxford hospitals, which already struggle to recruit enough staff because of the high living costs in the city, will hit breaking point.

Dr Clarke told the *Banbury Cake*: "On the morning of the result I met a German consultant I work with, and we were both crying.

"It was partly because the impact on the NHS is going to be so horrific, but also because everyone who is an EU national or non-Briton sees that racism drove the Leave campaign.

"There has already been abuse. A very good friend of mine took her daughter to the eye hospital at the John Radcliffe Hospital, there was a Polish consultant there, and a teenager in the waiting room started giving him racist abuse.

"I've spoken to junior doctors who planned to live their lives in the UK who are now considering going home."

One of those, a Belgian doctor training in Oxford, is now not sure what his British qualification will be worth in other EU countries when he finishes training in six years.

He asked to remain anonymous, but said: "Young doctors from the EU are definitely going to come here less.

"If I were looking for somewhere to train to be a doctor, I wouldn't have come to the UK in these circumstances.

"When I first came to the UK it was very welcoming, but that has taken a hit."

He said he felt he now had no choice but to apply for British citizenship and hope he gets it.

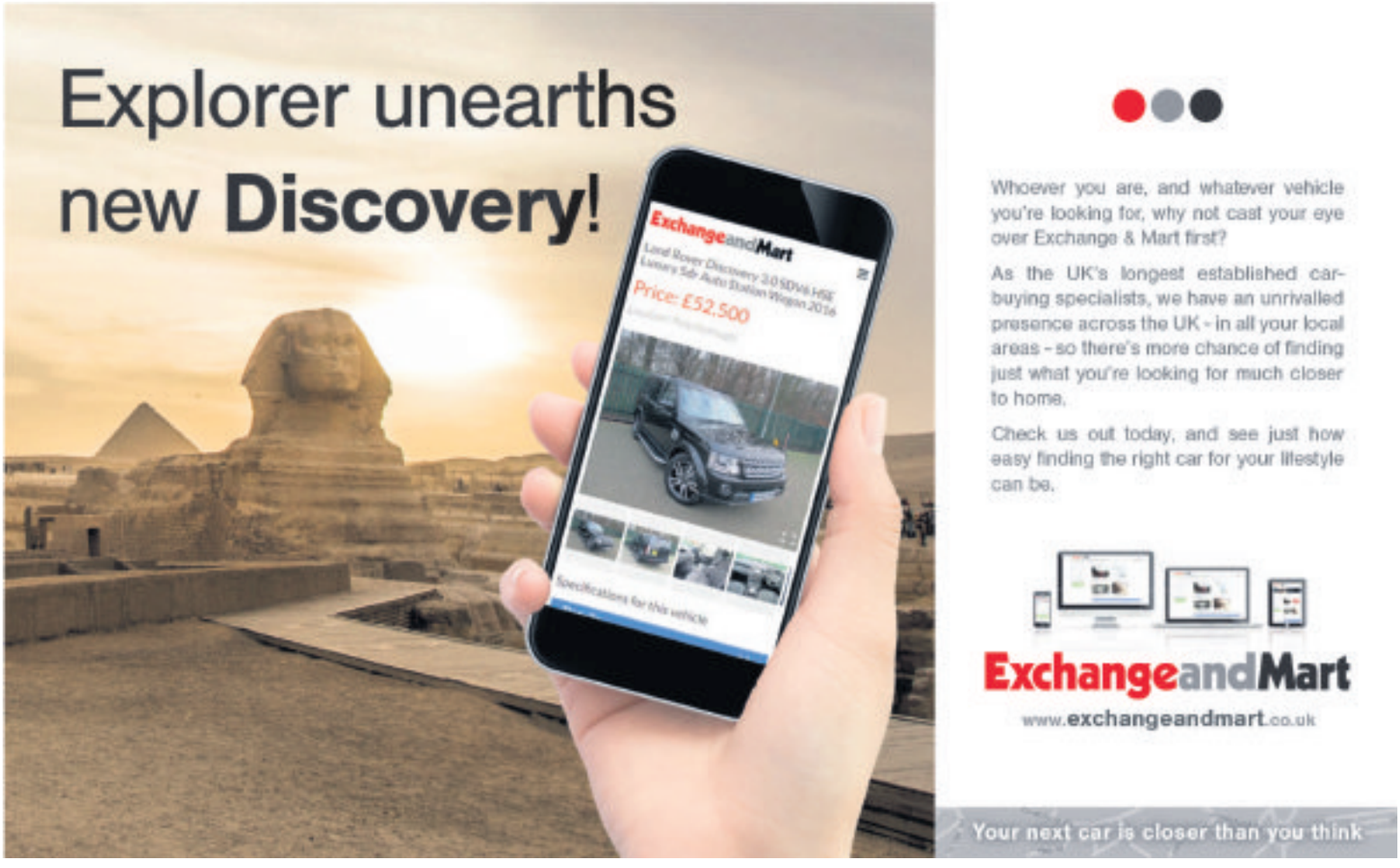
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH), which runs the John Radcliffe, Churchill and Horton General Hospital in Banbury, currently employs 1,386 non-British EU citizens out of a total staff of 12,558 – over 11 per cent.

The trust and Oxfordshire's mental health authority Oxford Health have long relied on recruitment from the EU to help cope with long-term staffing problems.

In the 2015/16 financial year, OUH overspent by nearly £17 million on staffing costs, largely because hospitals had to recruit temporary agency staff to plug vacancies.

Over 250 nurses from the EU were offered jobs in 2013 and 2014 and 70 nurses from Spain are being recruited to work in Oxfordshire hospitals now.

Oxford Health employs 346 non-British EU nationals out of a total staff of 6,059 – over five per cent.



Oxfordshire Listings

Events

THURSDAY

Explosive Workshop Family Day: Museum of Oxford, Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford. With Science Oxford. Sessions 11am, 12pm, 1pm, and 2pm, suitable for children aged 5-12. £4 per child (accompanying adults free). 01865 252334.

Story Book Pottery – The Odd Egg: No Two Things, 120 Broadway, Didcot. Sit down at 1.30pm and 3.45pm to listen to a children's book and then create a piece of pottery inspired by that week's story. This week it's a fun egg cup. £8. 01235 511550.

Summer Trails and Activities: Museum of the History of Science, Broad Street, Oxford. Drop-in. 12pm. Free. 01865 277280.

FRIDAY

Discover and Play: Earth Trust, Little Wittenham. Forest School for the under-5s. 10am. £4 suggested donation per child. 01865 407792.

SATURDAY

70's/80's Disco and BBQ in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care: Freeland Village Hall, Wroslyn Road, Freeland. 7.30pm. £10 in advance. 07754 271831.

Antique & Collectors Market: Kidlington Methodist Church, Oxford Road, Kidlington. 10am. Free. 01865 371494.

Bike Maintenance: The Mix Community Space, 15 Mill Street, Wantage. Mobile With Lew Lawton. Participants will work on their own bikes. 10am. £10. 07768 767787.

Diary Dreaming and Doodling: The Story Museum, Pembroke Street, Oxford. Writer Sally Bayley will introduce the dream worlds of famous diary writers Anne Frank, Sylvia Plath, and Adrian Mole. Plus fun writing and voice exercises. 2pm. £12. 01865 790050.

Family Picnic Afternoon: Oxford Botanic Garden, Rose Lane, Oxford. Celebrate Love Parks Week with food, crafts, music, games and more. 1pm. Adults £5, children free with paying family member. 01865 286 690.

National Gardens Scheme: 32 New Yatt Road, Witney. An exuberant plantswoman's suburban oasis, brimming with traditional and unusual plants in a small but long rear garden to an Edwardian house. Wheelchair access. Dogs on leads. Plant sale. 2pm. Adult £3, children free.

SUNDAY

Bicester and Kidlington Ramblers: Thornborough Bridge, Bridge Street, Thornborough, Buckinghamshire. Moderate circular 14.5-mile walk via Leckhamstead, Wicken, Nash and Thornborough. Picnic stop. Registered assistance dogs only. Leader Mike Sargeant. 10am. 07751 196132.

Car Boot Sale: Kirtlington Sports Field, South Green, Kirtlington. 9am. Cars £8 and vans £10. 07764 226646.

National Gardens Scheme: Broughton Grange, Wykham Lane, Broughton. An impressive 25 acres of gardens and light woodland. The centrepiece is a large terraced walled garden created by Tom Stuart-Smith in 2001. Plant sale. Teas. Coaches welcome. 10am. Adult £7, children free.

National Gardens Scheme: Broughton Castle, Broughton, Banbury. One acre of shrubs, herbaceous borders, walled garden, roses, climbers seen against backdrop of C14-C16 castle, surrounded by moat in open parkland. House also open at an additional cost. Wheelchair access. Dogs on leads. Teas. 2pm. Adult £5, children free. 01295 276070.

Ramblers walk: Cowleaze Wood, North end of car park, Stokenchurch. Five-mile walk via Aston Rowant Nature Reserve. After walk, option to have picnic lunch and look for orchids. 10am. 01865 423555.

Summer Sundays Cream Teas: The Reading Room, The Green, Combe. 2.30pm. £4.50 for cream tea (cake, scone and tea). 01993 898348.

Walk (Fieldpaths): Plough, East Hendred. SU459889 six miles. A lovely Chilterns walk. Bring refreshment for a stop. Pub at the end of the walk. Assistance dogs only. 10am. 01865 373366.

MONDAY

Clumps Club: Earth Trust, Little Wittenham. Earth Trust's summer holiday club for 7-11 year olds. A different wild adventure each day. Monday: Wild survival. Booking essential. 9am. £30 per child per day, book all five and get one free. 01865 407792.

TUESDAY

Bicester and Kidlington Ramblers: Fox Inn, Fox Lane, Souldern. Leisurely 3.5-mile walk via Aynho. Leader Mary Gough. Park and meet near the Fox Inn. 10am. 07939 826412.

Drop-in family event – Incredible Crowns: Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Harrisons Lane, Woodstock. Create a crown fit for a birthday Queen. 2pm. Free for kids with a paying adult. 01993 811214.

Family Fun – Animal Olympics: Sutton Courtenay Environmental Education Centre, Sutton Courtenay Road, Sutton Courtenay. 10am. £4 per child, accompanying adults free. 01235 862024.

Kidlington & District Historic Society: St John's Ambulance Hall, High Street, Kidlington. A talk by Gill White entitled 'The most dissolute man in London – The First Duke of Devonshire and the Building of Chatsworth'. 7.50pm. £3.50 for Visitors with under 26's 50p. 01865 375758.

Summer Fun: Vale & Downland Museum, 19 Church Street, Wantage. Themed activities every week. Drop in anytime between 11am-3pm (there will be a break 12.30-1pm). Free but donations welcome. 01235 771447.

The Water Gypsy: Vale & Downland Museum, 19 Church Street, Wantage. Local historian Julie Ann Godson will be telling the true Cinderella story of The Vale of the White Horse, of how a Thames fishergirl became a viscountess. 7pm. £5 for Friends of the Museum, £7 for guests. 01235 771447.

Tudor Tuesdays: Oxford Castle Unlocked, Oxford Castle, Oxford. Take part in Tudor Tuesdays, a drop-in arts and crafts workshop with the opportunity to dress up in Tudor costume and try the art of calligraphy. 10am. £1 per child. 01865 260 666.

WEDNESDAY

Quiz Night in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care: The Oxfordshire Yeoman Pub, 172 Wroslyn Road, Freeland. 7.30pm. £3 per person. 07754 271831.

Walk (Fieldpaths): Russell's Water Common. SU713889 6.75 miles. A circular walk taking in the Warburg Nature Reserve and the Oxfordshire Way. Bring refreshments and a packed lunch, pub at end of walk. Assistance dogs only. 10.30am. 07941 811537.

Music

THURSDAY

The Wheatsheaf, 129 High Street, Oxford: James Allsopp. Jazz saxophonist accompanied by the Spin Trio. The Spin Jazz Club. 8.30pm. £10, £8 (conc), £6 (student).

Modern Art Oxford, 30 Pembroke Street, Oxford: Cameron Vale and Weddings. 7.30-11pm. £6 in advance, £7 on the door.

To get an event of any kind listed here, enter the details into our easy-to-use online database at thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/events

Please add your event no later than ten days before the day of publication.

FRIDAY

Exeter College Chapel, Turl Street, Oxford: Baroque Music by Candlelight: Salve Regina. £18, £16 (seniors), £10 (students). 8pm. 01865 305305.

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Mankala. Multicultural eight-piece pan-African fusion band. 11.30pm. £7 (adv).

O2 Academy, 190 Cowley Road, Oxford: Callow Saints, Deadbeat Apostles, The Other Dramas, Out Of The Village, Rose Segal, Sarah De Warren, Meredith Baker. Local female vocalists and singer-songwriters. 6pm. £8.

SATURDAY

St Helen's Church, West St Helen Street, Abingdon: Derby Cathedral Choir. Free, with retiring collection. 7.45pm. 01235 520144.

St Nicholas Church, Church Street, Chadlington: An Evening with Bill and Bob (Celebrating William Shakespeare and Bob Chilcott). Highlighting the versatility of Chilcott's work, Commotio will perform both a capella works and with acclaimed jazz pianist Alexander Hawkins and jazz trio. £12 (£8 concessions). 7.30pm.

The Brewery Tap, Ock Street, Abingdon: Texas Ghost Train. Rhythm and blues. 8.30pm. Free.

Woodstock Social Club, 44 Oxford Street, Woodstock: Jeff Denton. Comedy vocalist. 8.30pm. Free entry – donations welcomed. 01993 812094.

SUNDAY

All Saints' Church, Church Street, Sutton Courtenay: The Charm of the Cello. With Valerie Findlay and Madeleine King (piano). £6.50 (student £4); season pass £28/£16. 6pm. 07788 715873.

Holywell Music Room, Holywell Street, Oxford: Jack Gibbons plays Bach. £16 (on door £20). 8pm. 01865 305305.

The Queen's College Chapel, High Street, Oxford: Pax Christi Chorale Evensong.. 6.15pm. Free. 01865 279125.

Oxford Wine Café, 38 South Parade, Summertown: B.D. Lenz Fusion Trio. New Jersey sax man. 6.30-9pm. Free.

MONDAY

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Black Circles. The Haven Club. Blues. 8pm. £8 (adv), £10 (otd), £5 (NUS).

The Jericho Tavern, 56 Walton Street, Oxford: Debbie Bond, Ted White. Famous Monday Blues. 8pm. £10.

TUESDAY

Exeter College Chapel, Turl Street, Oxford: Tudor Music by Candlelight: My Ladye Loves. £17, £15 (seniors), £10 (students). 8pm. 01865 305305.

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited. Jazz at the Bully. Swing/mainstream jazz. 8.30pm. Free.

WEDNESDAY

All Saints Church, Lime walk, Headington: Bellaphonics. London-based a cappella quartet. Free. 7pm. 07894 136754.

Exeter College Chapel, Turl Street, Oxford: Baroque Music by Candlelight: In Guilty Night. £18, £16 (seniors), £10 (students). 8pm. 01865 305305.

Holywell Music Room, Holywell Street, Oxford: Jack Gibbons plays The Divine & Diabolic. £16 (on door £20). 8pm. 01865 305305.

The White House, 38 Abingdon Road, Oxford: Blues at The White House. The best local blues acts with Tony Batey & Sal Moore and friends. 8pm. Free.

THURSDAY

Methodist Church, High Street, Witney: Lunchtime Recital – Shakespeare, The Great Fire of London and Capability Brown. Bethany Partridge, soprano, Archie Bott, baritone, Annabel, mezzo-soprano, Peter Cowdrey, piano, Paul Molyneaux, poetry. Free. 12.30pm. 01993 702296.

FRIDAY

Angel, Market Square, Witney: Nikki Petherick. Free. 9pm. 01993 703238.

Carterton Social Centre, Brownes Lane, Carterton: Country & Western Dance with Montana Country Band. £6. 8.30pm. 01993 850682.

Exeter College Chapel, Turl Street, Oxford: Baroque Music by Candlelight: Le Roi Danse. £17, £15 (seniors), £10 (students). 8:pm. 01865 305305.

The Northcourt, Northcourt Road, Abingdon: The Floyd Effect – The Pink Floyd Tribute Show. £15-£17otd. 7.30pm. 01235 856076.

SATURDAY

St Peter's Church, Thames Street, Wallingford: Huw Wiggin (saxophone) and James Sherlock (piano). £14 or £12 paid in advance. 8pm. 01491 824792.

St Denys' Church, Church Green, Stanford in the Vale: An English Serenade. Features The New Oxford Trio. £12. 7.30pm. 01367 718420.

O2 Academy, 190 Cowley Road, Oxford: Bloodshot, Infurious, Contek, A Nightmare Upon Us. Metal/hard rock. 6.30pm.

Woodstock Social Club, 44 Oxford Street, Woodstock: Mac & Desperado. Country and Western. 8.30pm. Free. 01993 812094.

SUNDAY

All Saints' Church, Church Street, Sutton Courtenay: Summer Spotlights. Grand Finale of 2016 Parish Proms, with Lynne Winter (soprano) and the Spotlight Entertainers. £6.50 (student £4); season pass £28/£16. 6pm. 07788 715873.

Exeter College Chapel, Turl Street, Oxford: Harpsichord Recital by Candlelight: Fancies & Caprices. £14, £12 (seniors), £10 (students). 8pm. 01865 305305.

Oxford Wine Café, 38 South Parade, Summertown: Josephine Arthur Trio. Vocals, piano and bass. 6.30-9pm. Free.

TUESDAY

Exeter College Chapel, Turl Street, Oxford: Baroque Music by Candlelight: Salve Regina. £18, £16 (seniors), £10 (students). 8pm. 01865 305305.

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Guitar Summit. Jazz at the Bully. 8.30pm. Free.

WEDNESDAY

All Saints' Church, Lime Walk, Oxford: All Saints' Summer Festival Of Music & The Arts. Aileen Thomson, soprano. Free admission. 8pm. 07941 724326.

Blackwell's Bookshop, 48-51 Broad Street, Oxford: The Bookshop Band. Original songs with score and lyrics inspired by books. £6. 7pm. 01865 333623.

Exeter College Chapel, Turl Street, Oxford: Baroque Music by Candlelight: A Musical Offering. £17, £15 (seniors), £10 (students). 8pm. 01865 305305.

Theatre

Burton Taylor Studio, Beaumont Street, Oxford: Until Jul 23, *Writing Home.* A celebration of poetry and performance from award-winning spoken word artists and new voices. 7.30pm. £10 (£8). Jul 29-30, BT Comedy Club. Featuring Kate Smurthwaite, Becky Moore, Conor McReynolds, Moj Taylor, Terry Green and James Stevenson. 7.30pm. £10 (£8). 01865 305305.

Glee Club, Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford: Jul 23, Allyson Smith, Phil Chapman and Tom Lucy. 7.15pm. £14.50. Jul 30, Andrew Ryan, Paul Tonkinson and Andy Robinson. 7.15pm. £14.50. 0871 472 04007.

Oxford Castle, New Road, Oxford: Jul 18-30, *The Tempest,* 7.30pm. £15 adults, £13 concessions. Aug 1-13, *Macbeth & A Midsummer Night's Dream.* BMH present an hour-long version of each play. 7pm. £15, £13 concs. 01865 260666.

Pegasus Theatre, Magdalen Road, Oxford: Jul 21-23, *Being Me.* Pegasus Youth Theatre. Various times. £9, £6 concs. 01865 812150.

Multiple locations, Becket Street, Oxford: Jun 23-Jul 30, *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Creation Theatre will take audiences on an immersive interactive adventure in small groups across multiple locations. 7.30pm. £24. 01865 766266.

New Theatre, George Street, Oxford: Until Jul 23, *Save The Last Dance for Me.* £17.90 - £39.90 plus £4 transaction fee. 0844 871 3020.

Old Fire Station, 40 George Street, Oxford: Jul 30, *Circleville, Circlevalley.* 2.30pm and 7.30pm. £12, £10. 01865 305305.

Old School Quadrangle, Bodleian Library, Oxford: Until Jul 31, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.* Globe Theatre On Tour. 7.45pm. £24 (£22). 01865 305305.

Oxford University Parks, Parks Road, Oxford: Until Aug 13, *Hamlet.* Creation Theatre. 7.30pm. £22 to £27. 01865 766266.

The Gardens of Wadham College, Parks Road, Oxford: Until Aug 18, *Love's Labour's Lost.* 7.30pm. £18-£23 (Previews June 28-30 £13). 0844 879 4418.

The Story Museum, 42 Pembroke Street, Oxford: Jul 23, Harry Potter Barbecue. An evening of Harry Potter-themed food, performances and activities, including a live comedy improv performance from the Oxford Imps. Other activities on offer include wand making, live magic, Dobby's cocktail bar, and a Potter themed photo booth. 7pm. £15. 01865 790050.

Broughton Castle, Banbury: Jul 30, *Listen.* Sunstone Theatre Company. 8pm. £4/£3. Jul 31, *Shakespeare 400 and a half years later.* Banbury Youth Theatre. 8pm. £4/£3.

Cornerstone Arts Centre, 25 Station Road, Didcot: Jul 21-23, *Carpe Noctem Seize The Night.* Show featuring over 100 young dancers. 7.30pm plus 1.30pm Sat. 7£18, £14.50 (concs). Jul 30, *The Last Post.* Outdoor. 11am and 2pm. £12.50. 01235 515144.

Orchard Dene Garden Theatre, Watts Lane, Blewbury: Until Jul 23, *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Open-air production with the Blewbury Players. 7pm. Adults £12.50, children £6. 01235 515144.

CakeSport

banburycake.co.uk/sport

Captain Lloyd Sabin hit 86 off 150 balls in Banbury's draw with Division 1 leaders Finchampstead

Sabin stars in nail-biter

Skipper impresses as Banbury hold leaders

BANBURY held Division 1 leaders Finchampstead to a draw in a thrilling finish, with the result in doubt until the final over.

Finchampstead and their talented South African seamer Jandre Coetzee have steamrollered all opposition in recent weeks in the Home Counties Premier League.

But they met their match in Banbury, who recovered from 60-5 to reach 195-9, after being put in to bat.

They were rescued by a superb innings from captain Lloyd Sabin, who made 86 from 150 balls.

He received support from Ashley Blanchard, who scored 37.

Coetzee took only one wicket, while his opening partner Matt Carter took 4-56.

However, Coetzee shone with the bat making 43 not out off 43 balls.

But the task of scoring 12 runs from the final over proved just beyond Finchampstead as they finished on 194-8.

BANBURY

C Haupt c Kang b Carter	1
O Clarke b Coetzee	10
E Phillips c Kang b Carter	9
L Sabin c Rishton b Carter	86
R West c Rogers b Uttley	0
T Bradbeer b Uttley	4
A Blanchard c Kang b Dewes	37
L Ryan c Rishton b Carter	18
K Penhale not out	14
O Wright run out	3
B Taylor not out	5
Extras	8
Total (9 wkts, 64 ovs)	195

Fall: 1-2, 2-12, 3-31, 4-50, 5-60, 6-121, 7-169, 8-172, 9-186.

Bowling: Coetzee 15-7-25-1, Carter 19-5-56-4, Dewes 17-1-63-1, Uttley 13-1-45-2.

FINCHAMPSTEAD

A House c Blanchard b West	30
A Rishton c Blanchard b West	26
D Marles lbw Ryan	18
D Lincoln c Sabin b West	0
G Smith run out	24
W Rogers c Sabin b Ryan	5
S Kang b West	25
M Carter c Blanchard b West	7
J Coetzee not out	43
J Dewes not out	9
Extras	7
Total (8 wkts, 56 ovs)	194

Fall: 1-44, 2-72, 3-72, 4-90, 5-100, 6-107, 7-114, 8-174.

Bowling: Penhale 5-2-11-0, Taylor 3-0-20-0, Wright 2-1-6-0, Ryan 23-7-68-2, West 23-2-82-5.

Finchampstead 9pts, Banbury 13

McEachran claims trophy for Puritans

BANBURY United regained the Ron Thomas Memorial Trophy with a 2-1 victory over neighbours Easington Sports.

Leam Howards headed home a Felipe Barcelos cross to open the scoring seven minutes into the second half, before Josh Rose levelled against the run of play with a strike from the edge of the area.

But Banbury ensured they took home the trophy when Zac McEachran finished off an impressive passing move from ten yards out.

Mike Ford's men have also discovered their fixture list for the upcoming Evo-Stik Southern League season.

They kick-off their return to the Premier Division on August with a trip to Basingstoke Town, relegated from Vanarama National League South.

The Puritans travel to Redditch United on Boxing Day before welcoming neighbours Leamington on New Year's Day.

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ARIES Mar 21-Apr 19

You were ignoring important matters, but this week you're willing to face them head on. You've had time to rest and to plan your next very important move. With the ideas you're about to carry out, you can succeed in areas you were about to give up on earlier in the month. A moody younger person comes round by Thursday. Ring now so I can help you find clear vision.

0906 585 4360

TAURUS Apr 20-May 20

You may not like the advice your close ones are giving, but you know deep down inside they only have your best interests at heart. Use Tuesday and Thursday as your power days to bring life back under your control. A better personal and professional life are waiting if you do. Time spent with Sagittarians opens up a new career avenue. Ring now so we can find the facts behind current rumours.

0906 585 4361

GEMINI May 21-Jun 20

Jealousy is strong in your chart and is standing in the way of you having a healthy relationship. Your emotions and your imagination are working overtime and you begin to feel as if you need more of a commitment than is being offered. Step back and you'll see that actions will speak louder than words if you'll let them. Ring now to hear how house moves beckon for some of you.

0906 585 4362

CANCER Jun 21-Jul 22

Your career comes under the spotlight and those of you who have been involved in the wrong career will now take steps to get into the right job. Patience with an older person pays dividends and helps you to gain a better relationship with them. Luck in financial and legal matters ends your week on a high and gives you back your confidence. Ring now to make the most of your stars.

0906 585 4363

LEO Jul 23-Aug 22

Your chart indicates that you are pushing for a change you may regret asking for. Why not use this week to look at the evidence, rather than making rash decisions. Travel is well starred and can do much to enhance your love life. Jupiter helps you to make contact with a financial link you thought could be your downfall, but can actually be your saviour. Ring now and I'll reveal a secret.

0906 585 4364

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

If you don't have faith in what you are doing, then why should others? Try to believe in your dreams and so too will close ones. A rumour in the family is unlikely to be true, so be careful of casting blame where it may not be due. You could ruin a relationship which has only just got back on track if you do. Ring now to hear why you can afford to ask for so much more in love this year.

0906 585 4365

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Try to have a more laid back attitude to relationships, as it can only be of benefit to you if you do. Stop judging people on their past and allow them just to be. Flirtations which take place at the weekend have the chance to be something much more serious if you're willing to trust in your feelings and not just the advice of others. Ring now so I can tell you what Venus can help you achieve.

0906 585 4366

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Try not to cast opinions on those you don't really know or you will only be setting yourself up for a very big fall. You of all signs should know how important it is to give others the chance to prove themselves. So think back to two years ago when many of you had a dramatic fall from grace. Showing trust can earn you a friend for life. Ring now to hear how you're more psychic this week.

0906 585 4367

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

New situations bring out new emotions and help you to see that the world is a much bigger place than you thought it was at the beginning of this year. Jealousy in the family is behind comments you'll be making and receiving this weekend. Tiredness for you and many of the signs is behind such words and actions. Rein it in to come out a happier Sagittarian. Ring now to reveal all.

0906 585 4368

CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

So many people seem to think they know what is best for you, when it is actually you, and you alone, who should decide what to do with your life. I know you're scared to ask for what you want, but those close to you will not be as surprised as you may think. Foreign links prove lucky in business and finances. Ring now so we can talk about those recent mixed emotions.

0906 585 4369

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Someone you thought you could trust with a secret has let you down, but in the long run this will be a benefit to your life. Keep thinking positive and life will be positive. What was being denied would have come out in the end anyway. You and I know that! An ex comes to mind with something you read or hear. Trust your first instincts in what to do next. Ring now to maintain control.

0906 585 4370

PISCES Feb 19-Mar 20

Work and play go well together, as you get the chance to take professional relationships to a more enjoyable space in your life. Working on solo projects is also well starred and you learn how to balance your family life better. You enter August with the knowledge that you have shaped life and love more to your needs. Ring now to hear why it's worth rechecking the written word.

0906 585 4371

Independent Retailer Month

Pledge to shop locally for your 'indie' retailers

SMALL shops and businesses are getting a chance to shine this month during Independent Retailer Month.

Times are tough for small businesses competing with national chains and online retailers but there is still a thriving independent retail scene in Banbury.

Independent Retailer Month is a national event held in July which aims to persuade people of the benefits of buying from local retailers.

It highlights the important contribution they make to the community, the local economy and the retail sector.

According to research, for every £1 spent locally, between 50p and 70p recirculates back into the local economy. But for every £1 spent out of town or online, just 5p trickles back to the local community.

By convincing people to buy from local retailers, the initiative aims to change shopping habits long term and increase footfall in high streets and village centres.

J'DCruz Bags in Parsons Street, Banbury, sells leather handbags sourced, printed and crafted in Oxfordshire. The business has just won Best New Business Award in the Cherwell Business Awards 2016.

INDEPENDENT: J'DCruz Bags won the Best New Business Award in the Cherwell Business Awards

Owner Jasmine D'Cruz said: "I have found trading in Banbury fantastic and the local support is continuing to grow. Without being a local designer and having that support I feel it would be a lot harder.

"Shopping independently is important to me because it means being a part of something and creating a community.

"For my customers I feel that they really enjoy the fact of seeing where things are being made and the fact that they can have a hands-on approach. It's also from my point of view really nice to be able to make small changes that can make big differences, for example if a shape of a bag needs slightly changing or modifying I can implement it overnight, where as if I was under a big brand this would be harder to achieve."

Support for Independent Retail, the organisation behind Independent Retailer Month, is dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of local businesses.

It provides support, advice, ideas and inspiration to help retailers stay open for business. Its website features a free Independent Shops Directory where shoppers can search for small businesses.

There are free resources which business owners can download on the site, including Independent Retailer Month posters to display in-store throughout July.

Shops are encouraged to record videos to promote their business and products or services. Sharing positive customer feedback on social media is another way retailers can spread the word about the benefits of buying locally.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- ▲ Shop in small, independent stores as much as possible during July.
- ▲ Search for local independent shops on the retailer database at independentretailermonth.co.uk
- ▲ Promote your favourite local businesses by writing a review and sharing on social media
- ▲ Follow the campaign on Twitter @IndieRetail to find out what's happening in your area

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The Old School House in Chipping Warden has many original features

Period cottage was once the village school house

Gill Oliver
gill.oliver@nqo.com

A PAINSTAKINGLY refurbished Grade II listed former school house six miles north of Banbury is on the market.

Right in the heart of Chipping Warden, the property is opposite the village's medieval church of St Peter and St Paul.

It played a historic role in the community, as for more than a century it was home to teachers who were in charge of the education of local children.

The thatched building is believed to date back to the early 18th century when, according to local folklore, it was made up of two separate dwellings which housed the men rebuilding a nearby manor house.

It was transformed into a school house after 1832, when the village's first elementary school was founded by Lucy, Baroness North.

As a known local educational reformer, the school was entirely reliant on her patronage.

The Old School House was not refurbished until 1978, long after classes had moved to new premises in Byfield Road.

The property is now a pretty, three-bedroom cottage which has been sympathetically renovated.

The present owners, who have owned The Old School House for the past 18 years, have spent many years carefully restoring the building, including unearthing and refurbishing some of the original features.

Iain Powis, of agents Savills in Banbury, is marketing the property.

He said: "The Old School House is a delightful cottage with a rich history.

"With its central village location and period character, it is a picture postcard cottage which has been a family home for the last 18 years."

The Old School House is on the market at £395,000.

Contact Savills in Banbury on 01295 228000 or visit savills.com.

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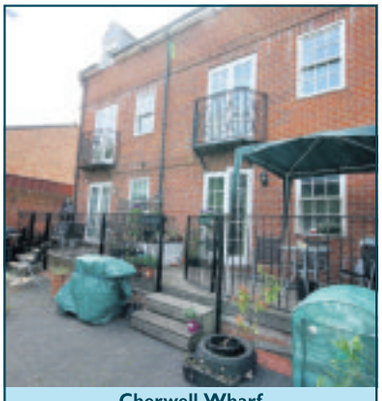

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Motors - first for new cars

New Car Road Test

The definitive view
by Andy Enright

Ford's Ranger points the way

FORD'S improved Ranger really has gone large in its appeal as a competitive proposition against tough rivals in the pick-up segment. The idea is to tempt everyone from builders to surf-boarding, mountain-biking families with what is now a very complete product indeed.

Background

It took Ford a long time to create a pick-up tailored to the needs of European customers but the brand finally managed it with the third generation Ranger model it launched in 2012. With this line-up, the marque at last had a product to properly compete with the tough Japanese triumvirate that rule this market segment this side of the Atlantic, Mitsubishi's L200, Toyota's Hilux and Nissan's Navara. All three are good vehicles but very obviously commercial in feel. This Ranger claims to offer something more, if not a road car with a pick-up deck, then the closest thing to that we've yet seen, with a design versatile enough for export to over 180 countries. Since this vehicle's original launch though, pick-up buyers have become more demanding, especially in terms of the efficiency they expect and the technology they want. This heavily revised Ranger line-up represents Ford's answer to that need.

Driving Experience

There aren't many pick-ups developed first and foremost to prioritise driving dynamics, but this is one of them. So what's it like? Well, really, it depends upon your expectations.

Does it ride and handle like a Discovery? Well of course it doesn't. A Discovery isn't built to take a 1.3-tonne payload. But does it set handling standards for the pick-up segment? Very definitely yes, more agile, stable, precise and comfortable than any vehicle of its kind we've seen to date. There's decent steering feel for a pick-up too, despite the introduction of electrical assistance for the helm of this revised model.

Design and Build

Almost the only global market in which you won't find this Ranger is that of the US. Apparently, it's not big enough. Seems pretty large to us, nearly five and a half metres long and with a bulk quite intimidating enough to frighten away fast lane dawdlers. This revised version gets a smarter look with a more aggressive front end featuring a bold trae-zoidal front grille.

And inside? Well, if you go for the four-door Double Cab, there's plenty of space in the back: two six-footers can certainly sit one behind the other with ease. Under the rear seat, you've hidden storage bins to keep tools and valuables away from prying eyes. Or, if the rear bench isn't in use, you can fold down the backrest for packages you may not want to consign to the rear loadbay.

Market and Model

There are three Ranger bodystyles - 'Regular' single cab, 'Super' (which has occasional rear seats) and 'Double Cab' with proper rear seats. The 'Regular' bodystyle is only available with base 'XL' trim, while the 'Super' option only comes with the mid-range 'XLT' and 'Limited' trim levels. At the top of the line-up is the high-spec 'Wildtrak' variant, offered only in Double Cab form and only available with the 3.2-litre TDCi engine. A single 2WD model is offered at the foot of the range (a 'Super' cab variant) but otherwise, 4WD is fitted to all derivatives.

Prices start at around the £18,500, excluding the VAT that most business buyers will be able to claim back. For the Double Cab bodystyle most customers will want, you'll need to be budgeting in the £20,000 to £25,000 bracket excl. VAT.

Practicalities & Costs

Potential business owners may well be approaching this Ranger thinking that sleek looks, a smarter more spacious cabin and class-leading driving dynamics are all very well but that they'd trade all of them for the practicality out back that this vehicle will need to earn its keep. They don't have to, for thanks to big dimensions and a high beltline, this Ford's load-lugging stats are as good, if not better, than any other vehicle in its segment. The 'Regular Cab' and 'Super Cab' models offer, respectively, 1.82 and 1.45 cubic metres, while the Double Cab version is also more than competitive with 1.21 cubic metres.

And running costs? Well the switch to electric power steering and a single 160PS 2.2-litre TDCi diesel for mainstream versions of this Ranger has done wonders for running costs, these now improved by 17%. So whereas the previous pre-facelifted four cylinder Ranger model only managed 36.2mpg on the combined cyce and 206g/km of CO_2, this 160PS 2.2 TDCi model manages 43.5mpg and 171g/km. Much more like it.

Pick-ups like this are never going to offer a slippery shape but even so, Ford have engineered a large car able to carry five adults and serious amounts of luggage, equipment or other heavy loads, that is relatively aerodynamic.

Summary

You can't deny that this revised Ranger is a thoroughly engineered product. But is it the first Ford pick-up to truly approach market leadership? We think it might be. It's safe, spacious, clever, able to carry large loads and, in four cylinder guise, finally has an engine efficient enough to match or beat the competition. Whether the need is for active family weekends, or simply to carry workmates with their kit and tools, this rugged do-almost-anything automotive swiss army knife seems to have it covered.

Facts at a glance

CAR: Ford Ranger pick-up range
PRICES: £19,280 -£31,900 - on the road [ex VAT]
ENGINES: 2.2-litre diesel (125 & 150PS) and 3.2-litre diesel (200PS)
MAXIMUM PAYLOAD: 1.21 cubic metres / 1340kg
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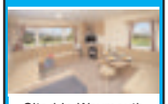

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Used Car Road Test

by Jonathan Crouch

Peugeot gives us love and eight

THE Peugeot 208 is a supermini that actually does very little that's new or groundbreaking, but it's significant for a hugely uplifting reason if you're a car enthusiast. It was the car that put Peugeot right back in the game as a top-drawer manufacturer of fun, classy hatches.

The brand's Eighties 205 supermini was a champ but its successor, the 206, was a dud that sold in huge numbers. That was actually about the worst publicity Peugeot could have given itself, broadcasting its ineptitude to a great deal of customers. The subsequent 207 was a trier, but was never quite there. With the 208, though, it was a different story.

Fun, well-built, sharply-styled and full of interesting features, it was a winner from the word go. If only Peugeot could get all those people whose faith in the marque was shaken by their 206 experiences back in the fold, the 208 could be a fixture at the top of the sales charts. Here's what to look for when buying used.

The History

Things started well for the Peugeot 208 from the outset in 2012. The design got its Euro NCAP five-star crash test result in the bag in the April of that year, then was first displayed to the crowds at the Goodwood Festival of Tweed a few months later in June. Then it scooped Auto Express' gong for 'Best Supermini' before real life buyers ever got to try one. By September, Peugeot was announcing a 208 GTi hot hatch version and an 'XY' luxury derivative.

At the end of 2012, Peugeot realised that the 208 had generated the strongest order-take for a launch of any vehicle in the company's history and had contributed to a 5.6 per cent growth in year on year sales.

The good times were coming back for the French brand. Old habits die hard though and they were unable to resist the old short term sales boost strategy of launching special editions. We got the first of these at the start of 2013, the 'Intuitive' version. May 2014 saw the launch of another special edition, the 'Style' and another followed in June, this time based on the GTi and christened the 'GTi 30th Anniversary'. In February 2015, a revised Peugeot 208 was announced for the Geneva Show, with revised styling and more personalisation options.

What To Look For

The 208 has enjoyed a far better reliability record than its problematic predecessor, but there are a couple of things you should check over when looking at the cars. The first is a fully stamped up service record.

Next, examine for flaking of paint on the bumpers and check that the air conditioning works and that the pixels on the centre display are all good. Also check for rear bumper scrapes. Finally check that the Bluetooth pairs reliably with your phone handset.

On The Road

The best thing about the 207 was its engine technology and the 208 carried on where the 207 left off with probably the most impressive range of efficient engines in the whole supermini class. Encouragingly,

Peugeot made a solid commitment to making the 208 a more fun car to drive than its immediate predecessor. Rather than start with a toe in the water, Peugeot launched a full product offensive, with three diesel engines and five petrol powerplants.

More good news came through an intensive programme of weight saving. Peugeot pared around 110kg off the weight of equivalent 207 models, which is a huge advantage in a car so compact. As well as improving economy and emissions, cutting weight improves acceleration, braking and agility - all traditional Peugeot supermini attributes. The entry level model tips the scales at 975kg, which isn't a great deal more than a Lotus Exige. That's impressive.

Of course, from the launch of this car, enthusiasts wanted to know what the 208 GTi hot hatch variant would be like. Well, it was great. Pop the bonnet and you'll find a 1.6-litre THP 200bhp petrol engine coupled to a manual gearbox with six close-ratio gears. With its maximum torque of 275Nm and its peak power of 200bhp, the 208 GTi polishes off the sprint to 62mph in 6.8 seconds. Stiffer springs were fitted and the ride height dropped by 8mm but Peugeot hatches have always ridden well and this 208 was no exception.

Overall

Genuine petrolheads will know the contribution Peugeot has made to automotive history, so for many of us, the late Nineties and Noughties were a painful time, as this once-brilliant company foisted cars like the 206, the 307 and the flabby 607 on us. Cars that neither rode nor handled well just didn't seem as if they should carry a lion on their badges and it took a long time for Peugeot to come good. The 208 and the subsequent 308 showed the French company was back in the groove.

As a used buy, a 208 stands up extremely well. Reliability has been better than many had hoped for, residual values have stood up fairly well as a result and the GTI is just a little belter. No, it's not quite as pin-sharp as a hot Clio on a race track, but we think that makes it a better road car on typical British roads. You could say that of the standard version too. It smacks of Gallic greatness.

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Motors - first for new cars

New Car Launch Model Of The Week

by Jonathan Crouch

An active approach to efficiency

BMW'S 2 Series Active Tourer five-seat compact MPV gets the Munich brand's latest Plug-in technology. It makes quite a difference too. This car uses a BMW eDrive electric motor and a 1.5-litre three-cylinder BMW TwinPower Turbo engine to offer both an electric driving experience and unrestricted mobility.

The resulting combined fuel consumption of 141.2mpg and CO2 emissions figure of 46g/km set the benchmark in the class.

Background

If you like the idea of plugging in your family-sized BMW but you don't want something as unusual-looking as the company's i3 model, then your dealer will point you towards this car, the 225xe version of the brand's 2 Series Active Tourer five-seat compact MPV.

You might be tempted to see this as an i3 in a more conservative set of clothes, but in reality, this 225xe is a rather different product. Whereas the i3 is a full electric car that can be optional ordered with a tiny range-extender engine, the 225xe is a proper Plug-in hybrid. This means that instead of the i3 Range Extender model's noisy bike engine, you get a proper 1.5-litre three cylinder TwinPower Turbo unit borrowed from a MINI that'll cut in once your 25 mile all-electric driving range is used up.

Driving Experience

If you don't get around to telling your passengers that this 2 Series Active Tourer features cutting-edge Plug-in hybrid power, they probably won't guess. You might like to tell your business colleagues around the water cooler that the 1.5-litre TwinPower petrol turbo engine it uses is the same as that in BMW's i8 supercar: then again, you probably won't bother. That would draw attention - which is precisely what a typical 225xe owner wouldn't want.

If you do put your foot down and use that MINI Cooper engine to its maximum, then things go pretty rapidly: 62mph is 6.7s away en route to 126mph. Better though to settle back and try and maximise the claimed 25 mile all-electric driving range. We say 'claimed' because it's unlikely you'll replicate that unless you drive like a nun. Around 15-20 miles is more achievable. Like all 2 Series Active Tourer models, this one drives through its front wheels in a very un-BMW-like fashion.

Design and Build

Intentionally, BMW has kept the visual changes that differentiate this 225xe variant from its conventionally-engined range stablemates to an absolute minimum. Which will leave potential buyers needing to like the standard 2 Series Active Tourer model's quite conservative design. The short overhangs and long wheelbase, the wedgy profile, the L-shaped rear lights, the crisp contours and the smart swage lines all point to this Munich maker. It also seems sportier than you might expect a car of this kind to be, courtesy of things like the steeply raked windscreen and the way that the distinctive double kidney grille is positioned lower than the headlights.

Market and Model

To incentive you to buy a Plug-in hybrid car of this kind, the government very kindly offers you £2,500 towards the cost of purchase, via it's Plug-in car grant programme. That reduces the 225xe's asking figure to around £30,000, which isn't any more than you'd spend for a well-specified 220d version of this car.

That's for the base 'Sport' variant; for a little more, a plusher 'Luxury'-spec model is also being offered.

It'll also help that this model, like all 2 Series Active Tourer variants, comes well equipped. You get smart alloy wheels, LED daytime driving lights, front foglights, an automatic tailgate, Park Distance Control rear parking sensors, heated power mirrors and heated washer jets, an alarm, a chrome-finished exhaust pipe, plus auto headlamps and wipers.

Cost of Ownership

Like all Plug-in hybrid models, this 225xe quite legally distorts the official NEDC New European Driving Cycle tests that produce the fuel and CO2 figures the industry depends upon. This is managed through the simple expedient of beginning the test fully charged, which means that this car will go for up to 25 miles before it uses any fuel at all. Hence the official figures it generates - 141.2mpg on the combined cycle and 46g/km of CO2. Will you as an owner get anywhere near this kind of return in real life? No. Will the car prove more affordable to run than the comparable 218d and 220d diesel versions? Quite possibly.

It really all depends on the kind of driving you do. High mileage owners and those without access to a garage will dismiss the prospect of 225xe ownership out of hand but if you don't have these constraints and don't cover more than 20 miles a day as part of your commute, then this car could make a lot of sense. Buy the optional BMW i Wallbox - as all owners inevitably will - and the car can be recharged in 2hours 20 minutes. Plus it generates a BIK tax liability of just 7%. Makes a lot of sense.

Summary

Did you ever expect to see a BMW MPV built around front wheel drive, a three cylinder engine and electric power? I'm not sure I ever did. Still, in this 225xe, we've got exactly that and it's a package that actually makes a lot of sense for the right practicality-orientated family buyer - someone with a business-minded eye on their taxation status who still enjoys their driving.

This probably isn't the BMW you dreamed of owning in your school or college days. But it could well be the one you actually need.

Facts at a glance

CAR: BMW 225xe
PRICES: from £30,045 [inc. of government grant]
INSURANCE GROUP: 23
CO2 EMISSIONS: 46g/km
PERFORMANCE: 0-62mph 6.7s max Speed 126mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION: (combined) 141.2 mpg
STANDARD SAFETY FEATURES: DSC+ stability control, ABS, six airbags
WILL IT FIT IN YOUR GARAGE?: length/width/height mm 4342/1800/1586mm

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